

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

Section III: The Early Republic Diplomatic Terms & Historical Events

Diplomatic & Governmental Terms

Alliance A formal pact or agreement between nations, especially for the purpose of supporting each other against military threats from other nations, or in times of war.

Alien A person who owes political allegiance to another country or government; someone who is not a citizen of the country in which they are living.

Ally The term used to describe a nation which has entered into an agreement or treaty with another nation for the purposes of mutual support.

Ambassador The official representative from one country to another. An Ambassador is the highest ranking official assigned to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. In the United States, an Ambassador is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The title of Ambassador was first used in the United States in 1893. Prior to that, the highest ranking American diplomats were Ministers Plenipotentiary.

Blockade An official action designed to prevent people or goods from moving from one place to another. A war measure that isolates some area of importance to the enemy.

Cabinet Department A department of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. Each department is headed by one of the President's top advisors, known as the Cabinet. The Department of State is the oldest Cabinet Department.

Chargé d'Affaires The member of a diplomatic mission who takes charge of an embassy or legation during the temporary absence of its head. The chargé may also be the diplomat who acts as head of a country's lowest-level diplomatic

mission that is neither an embassy nor a legation.

Commission A group of representatives or diplomats who are given authority to accomplish a specific task.

Compact theory A political theory arguing that the United States was formed through a compact of all the states and is, therefore, a creation of them. States should then be able to determine if or when the federal government exceeds its authority.

Concession A grant of land by a government for a specific purpose or the right to profit from a specific activity.

Concurrent Power Power held at the same time by both the states and the federal government.

Constitution The document written by the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that defines the fundamental principles, laws, structure, functions, and limits of the Federal Government of the United States. It was ratified in 1788 and has been amended just 27 times.

Consul An official appointed by a government to protect its commercial interests and help its citizens in a foreign city.

Conventions A synonym for a treaty, used most often for multi-lateral agreements of general interest.

Diplomacy The term is used to describe the practice of conducting relations with other nations, such as negotiating treaties, alliances, or agreements.

Diplomat An individual who is appointed by a government to represent its interests and to conduct its relations with another government.

An Ambassador is the highest ranking U.S. Department of State diplomatic representative to another nation.

Diplomatic Corps Those engaged in on-going or specific official diplomatic efforts. Included are the Secretary of State, ambassadors, and special envoys to other nations and their staff members who support the work of diplomacy.

Diplomatic Mission An individual or group sent by a government to conduct negotiations or establish relations with another country. A diplomatic mission can be temporary or permanent.

Dispatches Official messages sent with speed between a government and its overseas diplomats or between nations.

Duty A payment levied on the import, export, manufacture, or sale of goods.

Embassy The official headquarters of a government's Ambassador and other representatives to another country. It is usually located in the capitol of the other country. An Embassy is the highest level of diplomatic representation.

Embargo An official ban by a government preventing trade with another country. An order of a state forbidding ships to enter or leave its ports.

Entangling Alliances A phrase from Thomas Jefferson's inaugural address advising Americans to follow a course of non-intervention in European affairs. It is often incorrectly attributed to George Washington.

Envoy An agent sent by a government or ruler to transact diplomatic business.

Foreign Policy The official views and policies of a government regarding its relations with other nations. In the United States, foreign policy is developed by the President, with the advice of the Secretary of State and others, and is implemented by the Department of State and any other officials designated by the President.

Legation A diplomatic mission headed by a Minister whose title was "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary." A legation is the second level of diplomatic representation and is less important than an embassy.

Minister Plenipotentiary A diplomat with the authority to represent a head of state but of a lower status than an Ambassador. Until 1893, diplomats who headed American missions overseas only carried the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. The complete title is "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary."

Naturalization The proceedings during which a foreigner becomes a citizen of another country.

Negotiate The term refers to discussions between individuals, groups, or nations that are conducted for the purpose of arriving at an agreement on a particular set of terms or actions.

Neutrality A legal status assumed unilaterally by a state during a time of war to stay out of the conflict.

Rebellion An attempt to remove a government or a leader by force.

Resistance Opposition to someone or something, especially a political or military opponent.

Revolution The overthrow of one government and its replacement by another.

Revolt An attempt to remove the government of a country by some of its citizens, using force.

Sedition An insurrection or rebellion against the authority of a state.

Sovereignty The authority of a state to govern itself.

Tariff A tax imposed on imported goods by a government to support the interests of its own citizens or industries.

Theoretical Pacifism A belief that all international disputes can be solved by arbitration or diplomacy.

Treaty A formal agreement between two or more countries or states, as in reference to terms of peace or trade and any limitations associated within the agreement.

Important Places, Concepts, and Events

Cadore Letter An 1810 letter from a French official notifying the United States that French trade restrictions would be removed if the British took similar action. The United States reacted favorably and were widely considered to have been tricked by the French.

Excise Tax An excise tax is one levied on specific commodities or goods within a country. Excise taxes are inland taxes, while customs duties are border taxes.

Gazette A journal or a newspaper

Inaugural The first of a series of events, such as a President's first speech.

Manifesto A public written declaration of policy or aims.

Nullification Refusal of a U.S. state to enforce a federal law within its boundaries.

Proclamation A formal, official statement by a government.

Quasi-War An undeclared war, fought mostly at sea, by the United States and France from 1798-1800. The Convention of 1800 ended the Quasi-War.

Resolution A formal expression of intention by a legislative body or another formal meeting, generally after taking a vote.

Treaty of Ghent The agreement between the United States and Great Britain that ended the War of 1812.